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ABSTRACT

Defining "information overload" as the condition that occurs when the amount of available information exceeds the ability of the user to process it, this paper contends that this condition has now affected the arena of academic debate. The first section of the paper examines the nature of overload and discusses its consequences on the processing of information and meaning. The second section introduces the idea of "generic argument," an adaptive behavior in debate that has resulted from the increased availability of information. Defining generic argument as any argument within a deliberative framework that recurs in fulfilling the discovery of issues, this section offers a rationale for its use as a means of coping with overload. The third section of the paper discusses a number of implications for the use of generic arguments. (FL)

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Coping with Information Overload:

Generic Argument as the Least Common Denominator

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Coping with Information Overload:

Generic Argument as the Least Common Denominator

In his Preface to the fifth edition of Argumentation and Debate, Austin Freeley observed that the sum total of knowledge has doubled every five years since 1960.[1] This exponential increase in the amount of information (which I prefer to the term "knowledge") characterizes both the general availability of information in society as well as within academic debate.

As the available amount of information increases, it creates a growing pressure upon its users to deal with it meaningfully. When the amount of available information exceeds the ability of the user to process it, a condition generally referred as "information overload"[2] is created. While there are several possible responses to dealing with information overload, most of these responses result in varying forms of dysfunction.

The expansion in the amount of information has brought the phenomenon of overload to the arena of academic debate. Information has increased in both the consideration of the substantive issues about which we debate, as well as through the proliferation of theoretical issues about the process of debate. In one sense, debate is a reflection of the larger social world in which we live. It should not be surprising, then, to discover alterations--adaptations, if you please--in the practice of academic debate. As Freeley noted:

> . . . the accelerated rate of change has had a marked impact on the field of argumentation and debate. The simple fact is that in many important ways we no longer analyze arguments, build cases, or conduct debates in the way we did ten or even five years ago.[3]

It shall be my contention in this paper that the development and use of what has been labelled the "generic argument" is one such adaptive behavior in the practice of contemporary debate resulting from the increased availability of information. In developing this position I will briefly elaborate on the

nature of overload, explain its consequences to the processing of information and meaning, define what I understand as generic argument, and offer a rationale for generic argument within the framework of information overload. Finally I will offer some implications of the use of generic argument.

The Nature of Overload

While the concept of information overload may be viewed as a self-defining term, there is some utility in tracing the development of the concept. Prior to the popularization of the term "communication overload," sociologists had postulated the concept of "cultural lag." Writing in 1923, William Ogburn explained cultural lag in his book, Social Change:

> The thesis is that the various parts of modern culture are not changing at the same rate, some parts are changing more rapidly than others; and that since there is a correlation and interdependence of parts, a rapid change in one part of culture requires adjustments through other changes in the various correlated parts of culture.[4]

The lag in the "correlated parts of culture" might be adjusted within a reasonably short period of time. However, Ogburn recognized that the length of lag could persist for a considerable number of years, a condition he labeled as a period of "maladjustment."[5]

The cause of maladjustment was most frequently to be found in the differential rates of development between scientific knowledge and social knowledge. It was usually the case that scientific and technological advancements outpaced the ability of social institutions to make adjustments. As Klapp explained Ogburn's principle, it was most often found "that material culture, such as technology, changes faster than nonmaterial culture, such as beliefs and habits, resulting in maladjustment because old habits and ideas cannot keep up with new realities."[6]

While cultural lag did not specifically indicate that too much information was the reason for the maladjustments between material and non-material culture,

it does suggest that the absorption of information from one segment of social endeavors might be delayed in adaptations made by other social institutions. As one adage puts it: "What science proposes, social science disposes." The theory of cultural lag provided an early explanation of why scientific information often exceeded the capability of other social institutions to adapt to it.

The more contemporary treatment of information overload probably dates to Georg Simmel who observed that people often adopted an "attitude of reserve" to prevent the "indiscriminate suggestability" of others from dominating them.[7] Another sociologist, Karl Deutsch, labelled communication overload as "the disease of cities." Individuals seeking the greater range of choice afforded by the city may be overwhelmed by their own freedom to make choices. Deutsch suggested that the potential for the individual to confront overload was a function of the choices made possible by the metropolis. He notes:

> Recurrent overloads are thus not an alien disturbance intruding into the even functioning of the metropolis. They are, on the contrary, an ever possible result of the essential nature of the metropolis as a device for facilitating a wider range of free choices.[8]

In the sense in which Simmel and Deutsch treat overload, it is understood that as the number of choices available to the individual increase, there is a threshold, beyond which, additional information fails to facilitate the ability to make choices. Overload represents the point where the individual is no longer capable of absorbing the additional information in a usable fashion. Individuals are limited in receiving information through their processing capacities. Klapp describes this as Channel capacity:

> . . .beyond a point one cannot take more within a given period of time because of limits on the pathway through which information flows. All living systems have--indeed are--channels. All units through which information flows, whether living things or machines, are regarded as channels. . . .Overload is often defined in terms of measurable relationships between input and output of a system. The limit of a system, beyond which failure of communication from overload occurs, is usually called its channel capacity.[9]

In addition to the channel capacity limitations experienced by the individual, it is possible to characterize the capacity of groups and larger social institutions as being similarly affected by overload. In fact, Miller reports that the channel capacities per channel decrease as the size of the system increases.[10]

As institutions become larger, their capacity to generate information exceeds their capacity to use it. Raymond reports that the typical executive can receive and absord "only 1/100 to 1/1000 of the available information that is relevant to his decisions."[11] Even the enhanced retrieval of information through computer systems does not alleviate overload. Lancaster notes that the computer has accelerated the problem faced by professionals in sorting through the information. "They do not want more information from more sources because they are unable to cope with what they now receive."[12]

Related to the problem of the amount of information being generated is the problem of how to interpret it. Information is meaningful only within an interpretive framework. But information--phenomena, facts, data--does not suggest its own interpretive framework. As Polanyi has observed, knowledge of the principles and properties which operate at a subordinate level does not provide an explanation of the principles and properties which exist at a superordinate level of organization.[13] Reynolds notes that the use of of a "Baconian strategy" (essentially an inductive process of generating theory from the observation of phenomena) usually requires two conditions: The number of variables to be measured must be small and that there are only a few patterns which occur within the data. He suggests that within the social sciences the likelihood of fulfilling these conditions is remote.[14]

Within the perspective of information overload, Klapp proposes that separate from the processing of the amount of information, we are confronted with the subjective meaning we use to interpret information. He states we suffer lag

> between different sorts of information: on the one hand, mere information conceived as a reduction of uncertainty in any binary (yes-or-no) choice, commonly measured in bits, and on the other hand, meaning as information about the relation of something to a pattern or scheme of which one is part--an awareness that is necessarily subjective. Mere information that is additive, digital, analytical accumulates easily by being counted or categorized; whereas meaning, being subjective, and referring to synthetic or holistic properties that cannot be reduced to the sum of parts, might be called higher information that does not come easily, let alone inevitably, from a growing heap of mere information.[15]

The distinction which Klapp makes between "mere information" and "information as meaning" is an important one and points to two separate elements in the nature of overload. First, "mere information" reflects the quantity of information generated within a system and impacts most directly upon our physical channel capacity. When used in this sense, information overload suggests that the amount of information delivered (input) is greater than the amount of information processed (output). In essence, we get more data than we can process.

In the second sense in which information overload occurs, "information as meaning," there is a qualitative inability to interpret the data. We may conceivably have sufficient data, but we are incapable of interpreting it through a suitable frame of reference. The data is, in this sense, meaningless. Of course, the circumstance were we have all the data--mere information--is unlikely. Klapp postulates that the increase in mere information is rapid, even exponential, while meaning formation is relatively constant. Hence, meaning decreases proportionately to the acquisition of new information. He explains that;

> The reason for the steady curve of meaning formation is that society is already using most of its channel capacity for coding and decoding symbols and for synthesizing new meaning, and has invented no new ways to do so. Meanwhile, raw information pours in faster than ever, from sources such as science, technological invention, modernization, and changing fashion. So the paradox is possible: the more knowledge, the less meaning.[16]

The final point to be made here is that Klapp provides an explanation for the existence of cultural lag. The reason that one part of a culture may initiate changes that are not readily adopted by other institutions is that the information created may not be meaningful to the culture as a whole. So it would appear that in the sixty-odd years between the presentation of cultural lag as a theory and contemporary accounts of information overload we have come to the position that either the quantity of information or the qualitative use of information may constitute overload.

Consequences of Overload

The manner in which overload affects both the individual as well as social behavior had been categorized by Miller in 1960[17] and is still in use.[18] The effects from overload may include: (1) omission--temporary nonprocessing of information; (2) processing error--processing incorrect information; (3) queuing--delaying some responses during high input periods in the hope it may be possible to catch up during a lull; (4) filtering--selecting some kinds of information while ignoring others; (5) cutting categories of discrimination--responding in a more general way to informartion inputs, but with less precision than would occur at lower rates of information; (6) using multiple channels--spreading information through two or more channels relieves the rate of flow in any one channel; and (7) escaping from the task.

Each of these responses to overload are an attempt to reduce the processing load. Assuming they are effective, either singularly or in varying combinations with each other, there is a cost in decreased efficiency in information transmission. While not all systems may employ all of these mechanisms, generally, the larger the system (to be read as social institution), the more likely that most of these mechanisms will be available.[19]

As efficiency in the transmission of information occurs, the primary question which arises is what information gets eliminated. While individuals or social institutions may have strategies for selecting which information may be passed through, the strategy itself may obscure the information user to the consequences of the information that is ignored. Already cited is the conclusion by Raymond that 1/100 to 1/1000 of pertinent information is utilized by decision makers. The implication that ninety-nine percent of the relevent information to a task may be excluded as a matter of course is staggering.

Of course, the effect of information elimination is not just at any single level of decision-making. Within a pluralistic system, one in which decisions made at one level do not imply agreement at another, decision-makers may make choices and interpret meaning in ignorance or without understanding of the choices made by other actors in the system. An example with which many debaters may be familiar is cited by Klapp in illustration of the problem this may cause:

> The world energy crisis of 1974, compounded by the Arab oil boycott, pointed up the failure of information to solve problems: It had been foreseen for at least a decade by scientists giving full warning that the supply of fossil fuels was running out. Four years earlier a book had been published with the title The Energy Crisis, by Lawrence Rocks and Richard Runyan.[20]

Information, both in terms of data as well as interpretation, had been available to government decision makers long in advance of the events which precipitated a crisis disruption in fuel supplies. But the very abundance of information becomes part of the problem. Government decision makers, who by the way do not operate as a single agent, may disregard certain information in preference for other information. This, of course, assumes they receive it in the first place--which may not always be the case.

At least three separate levels of agents operate within the public policy decision making spectrum. Science and academic scholarship may fail to keep up

with developing adequate theory, and awash in a flood of data which is not unified by theory, may propose competing interpretations of information. This information is fed into government and administration which receives information from numerous constituencies, each championing its own agenda for political action. Compounding the information processing task may be structural rigidities of decision making process as well as competing political goals. Finally, the general public, with its own understanding of information (and likely misunderstanding of the rationale for decisions made government and science), may mobilize the political pressure to veto group action.[21]

With increasing sources generating both data as well as interpretations of information, the decision-making agents operating at various levels within the private and public sectors make choices in ignorance of the choices and rationale selected by other agents. As with the example on energy policy, policy dysfunction may occur because too much information may stand in the way of acheiving political consensus.[22] Authoritative sources (opinion leaders, experts, etc.), to whom many turn for interpretation, fail to provide an answer as they contribute to the welter of opinions:

> . . . with little consensus and less trust, that seldom speaks for more than a minority--the very multiplication of authoritative claims adding ironically to the bulk of information needing interpretation. So--even helped by interpretations of opinion leaders and the enormous speed of information diffusion--we see not gain in meaning, but a growing mountain of information about which people do not know what to think.[23]

So like the saying, "Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink," information overload may place us in the situation where we have plenty of information available to the consideration of public policy concerns, but without a useful means of securing it. Overload, both in the quantitative amount of data, as well as in competing interpretations of its meaning, contribute to the inability of decision-makers--ranging from the individual to various social

and public institutions--to make appropriate choices. The contemporary debater is confronted by this sea of information. It should not be unexpected that the difficulties of making appropriate choices should be any different within debate than within the general social milieu.

Enter Generic Argument

Attempts to define any term are fraught with difficulty (unless you believed all along that "any" means "all"). The introduction of "generic arguments" within the debate lexicon is a recent event. Recent debate texts do not provide much guidance as only Patterson and Zarefsky make reference to forms of generic arguments, and they do not provide any explicit definition except as the reader might derive from the context in which it is used.[24]

Nevertheless, I shall hazard to offer a definition derived, in part, from a dictionary definition, and in part from the context in which the arguments used in debate might serve to operationalize the term. I should note the disclaimer that this definition is necessarily subjective and, to the extent that I will later use it to justify the use of generic arguments, self-serving.

Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary includes the definition of "generic" as "relating to or characteristic of a whole group or class: General."[25] The question here is to what group or class does the characteristic relate? Patterson and Zarefsky provide a partial answer when they state that generic disadvantages are so named because "they apply generally to any plan that the affirmative may devise for setting up its program."[26] Hence, the class to which general arguments about the plan belong may be called "generic disadvantages." But what about other types of arguments (other than disadvantages)? May they properly be defined as generic?

My observation of arguments occurring in debate rounds suggests there are other types of arguments, which by their frequency of content or form,

that may be properly labelled as "generic." The "class" or "group" to which characteristics of these arguments relate is to be found in the very content of the argument (suggested by the resolution) or in its form (suggested by the function of the argument).

The position I am taking here is that arguments are "generic" to the extent that there are recurring issues of content or function which they fulfill. Commonly, this position is known as "stock issues." Nadeau defines a "stock issue" as "a possible issue, general in its phrasing, which may or may not become an actual and specific, main or secondary issue in the discussion on a definite proposal."[27]

Because the particular content of a given proposition may vary from other propositions, the function of an argument type may recur even when the particulars of the argument differ. Hultzen described four frames of issues which inhere in deliberative analysis. These issues, often identified as ill, blame, cure, and cost, define the locations where arguments may be discovered.[28] Because we may commonly investigate these frames, it would not be unusual to find types of arguments across topics which are similar in the function they discharge.

Similarly, within each of the frames offered by Hultzen, there are locations where we may discover status--the point where an assertion is met by a counter-assertion. The possibility of discovering three types of status--conjectural, definitive, and evaluative--elaborates the "generic" locations of types of arguments to be discovered.[29] Contemporary authors of debate texts have taken the "stock issues" as guidelines for debaters to use for the discovery of the actual issues of the debate. Since the function of argument within a deliberative framework remains constant, we should expect that debaters will continue to offer arguments that are analytically similar, even when the specific proposition under consideration changes.

Within a particular resolution, the content may refine general issues to particular arguments. While an array of specific proposals may be offered under the aegis of a given resolution, there are limitations imposed. As Patterson and Zarefsky have already noted, there may be restrictions to the action of the plan, fostering generic disadvantages to the types of action the affirmative may take. Further, the wording of the resolution may be such as to imply the problem area of the topic. The 1971-72 topic, 'Resolved: That greater controls should be imposed on the gathering and utilization of information about United States citizens" directs the consideration of debaters on the problem area more so than on the nature of the solution.[30]

In addition to the limitations provided through the resolution, there is usually a fair amount of overlap in the case construction used by teams. If a particular case area becomes popular, such as El Salvador or Nicaragua have under the current topic, then it would be expected that recurring issues of content would find their way into most debates.

Finally, the introduction of systems analysis to academic debate has suggested wider vistas for the debater to search for policy inter-relationships. Since policy effects are interconnected and controlled, even remote effects may be linked to a seemingly innocuous proposal.[31] Generic claims for cancer, inflation, and nuclear war may be possible because of the effects generated from a proposal.

So taking the definition I had stated from Webster's--relating to or characteristic of a whole group or class--and suggesting that the recurring content or form of argument defines the group or class, I propose that generic argument is any argument within a deliberative framework which recurs in fulfilling the discovery of issues. Both the content of an argument or its analytic function may serve to make it generally applicable across particular cases.

Generic Argument as a Means of Coping with Overload

I have indirectly alluded to the justification I will elaborate here. If one accepts the premise that the exponential increase in information (as mere information) is faster than the static assignment of meaning, then the challenge confronting the debater (as well as other social actors) is how to gain some control over the myriad of information. The application of generic arguments provides a vehicle by which the familiarity of content and/or function of an argument serves to give meaning to mere information.

The application of standard forms of arguments is hardly something one could call new. In the Rhetoric, Aritotle described twenty-eight lines of argument (otherwise known as "topoi" or "commonplaces") as well as standard refutations of "spurious enthymemes" (fallacies of argument).[32] The thought patterns of these arguments assumes regularity of function, so that even if the particular issue at hand is new, the form of the standard line of argument is familiar to the audience and hence contributes to their understanding of the refutation being made.

It is an extension of this rationale which underlies the generic argument. In a debate involving any topic (used in this sense to mean "all" topics), the line of argument directed against definition is always possible[33] The debater who develops standard forms of "Standards of topicality," engages a commonplace which is meaningful in a generic sense (appropriate to all topics), even though the particulars of its application will be modified by the specific case and topic under consideration.

Familiarity breeds at least one form of understanding--an understanding of the content of the argument as well as the implication of the function and application of the argument. To argue standards of topicality across topics allows the audience (in this case the debate judge) an understanding of the class of arguments called topicality. Without it being said in the debate, the judge also

understands the implication that winning the standards issue(s) serves as a decision criteria for resolving the particulars of the topicality argument. Similar applications can be made for other types of generic arguments, as with Patterson and Zarefsky's claim on generic disadvantages--the consequences of the argument apply to the class of plans generated by the particular resolution.

This type of argument allows the team proposing it to focus most of its attention to the application of the specific generic argument to the case at hand. In other words, generic arguments themself are known because of their familiarity of content and/or function, and the presumed knowledge that the judge knows the claim being issued allows the debater to focus his/her attention on making the argument relevant through claims directed to the links tying the claim to the particulars of the other team's case.

Generic arguments, which become contemporary forms of the commonplace, address the dual issues generated by the overload of mere information and meaning of information. In the case where an affirmative fosters new information which is unknown to the negative, the use of generic challenges to the function of affirmative case analysis serves to illustrate the point. Several years ago, under the consumer product safety topic, a few affirmative teams ran a case on "cyber lights." The thesis of the case was that cyber lights--brake lights which flashed at an accelerating rate as the rate of deceleration increased--would decrease the rate of rear-end collisions. It happened that one team running this case substituted an 8 cycle per second rate of flashing for the accelerating light which had been pilot-tested in San Francisco (in an attempt to spike out a disadvantage that variable flashing rates would trigger epileptic seizures). The plan-meet-need/solvency argument which the negative won stated that the affirmative could no longer claim an effect from a constant flashing rate (since the only empirical demonstration of decrease in rear-end collisions was tied to the accelerating rate of flashing).

Some readers may object to the preceding example as an instance of generic argument, or at the very least as a form of generic argument which is the cause of concern by many teachers and practioners in forensics. My answer to them would be that the recurring form, purpose, or function of argument is as much a criterion of generic argument as content. Whether we label these stases, commonplaces, or generic arguments, they characterize a class or group of argument types which may have applicability across propositions. Their recurrence allows us to make meaningful interpretation of novel information because regardless of content, they need to fulfill standard analytic functions of argument.

An additional consideration which may justify the generic argument is the nature of the analytic assumptions the affirmative (or in the case of a counterplan, the negative) brings to the debate. As Brock et al observed, "It is much easier to design a system that will result in advantages without disadvantages when the boundaries of the system are quite narrow."[34] As a matter of strategy, the affirmative either ignores or discards effects which would be weighted negatively against the consideration of a policy. However, the secondary or tertiary effects of a policy, because of their magnitude, may outweigh the justification of a proposal. The fact that the effects are remote (in terms of either the number of links necessary to create the effect or the probability of the effect) is not a reason to say it is inapplicable.[35]

The systems theorists have long argued that open systems are characterized by "equifinality"--an assumption that "a final state may be reached from different initial conditions and in different ways."[36] This translates to saying that a variety of causes or circumstances may each independently result in a similar effect. To presume that a generic claim is inapplicable because it is not intuitively apparent is to remove the debate process from the consideration of reasons and justifications provided within a round to an a priori set of allowable issues.

The familiarity with the claim of certain remote effects--nuclear war, cancer, Malthus, etc.--also meets the claim that generic arguments (here focusing on the content of the claim) helps to provide some control over the amount of information available on a particular issue. Generic claims of nuclear holocaust resulting from a range of policy decisions delimits the issues under consideration to ones with which the judge is probably familiar. This is not to say that other claims could not be constructed, but the very familiarity with the scenario makes it easier for the judge to comprehend.

In the sense that generic arguments give the audience comprehensible positions with which they are familiar, it allows them to render decisions intelligently. Admittedly, generic arguments may begin with the preconception of effect before the argument to which it is directed is ever heard. But to the extent that it can be justified in its application to the particulars of a given case, this reasoning backwards provides a means of controlling issues, and otherwise imposes meaning on an ever-growing amount of information available to the consideration of a proposal.

Implications of Generic Argument

There are several implications to the use of generic arguments as I have conceived the term. Let me anticipate a few of these implications and address them before closing:

1. All issues/arguments may be generic. Since I defined generic argument as including recurring content or form, it should seem apparent that any argument, through repitition of use, may be or become generic. I think this is true. The nature of debate is such that nothing succeeds like success, and the initiation of any argumentative strategy, if successful, is likely to be repeated. As Hagood noted in Forensics as Communication, "as knowledge that the theoretical departure has been rewarded spreads, the departure gradually is adopted by other teams and

soon becomes accepted practice."[37] While her example referred to the expansion of new theoretical arguments in debate, the process of imitation is applicable to all arguments. One team's innovation may become tomorrow's generic argument.

2. Generic Arguments do not limit innovation and creativity. While this may seem anti-thetical to the claim I have made that familiarity of content and form justifies generic argumentation, it does not stand as an impediment to the generation of new arguments.

First, consistent with the notion of stases and commonplaces, the application of recurring forms/functions of arguments means that new application of the general principles will have to be made to new instances. The fact that nuclear war contains a known body of information pertaining mostly to the consequences of such an event; it still needs to be applied to the particulars of a given causal sequence of events. A disadvantage mitigates the claims of a policy only when the probability of the claimed effects are demonstrated to be greater than the probability of advantages. The function of the argument remains constant, but the discovery of the links remains.

Second, the claims about creativity and spontaneity being inhibiting to the critical functions of debate are probably as old as the activity. The arguments here parallel the considerable dispute about briefing in debate. As long as seventy-five years ago The Speaker commented that debaters make "rigid speeches, discussing absurdly large questions in an absurdly short time."[38] Nichols and Baccus argued that "extepore debating consigned the brief to oblivion. . . . The brief has remained in debate parlance because no one, so far, has had the courage to show it the door."[39] Musgrave charged that the brief was unsuccessful because it "confines the debater to a set of arguments that may be irrelevant from the start and that are almost always irrelevant when the opposition's case is presented."[40]

The common thread through these arguments against briefing (and which implicitly connects with generic argument) is that discovering potential issues before the debate may obscure the debater to the actual issues in the debate. While it is probably true that debaters may ignore arguments appropriate to the debate, it is not a function of a prepared consideration. Analysis conducted outside of the debate about the likely content of issues to occur in the debate increases the level of argument. Poor strategic choices may occur in spontaneous response as readily as with a prepared argument. In responding to early challenges to briefing, Baird noted that the process of briefing "gives order to your thought, logical sequence and definitiveness of statement, and other rhetorical results that are no mean elements in effective speech. . . . The mature student of briefing needs not be a slave to his rigid document. Its construction has sharpened the mental processes, given facts, and created a mental alertness which means a continuation of creative thinking."[41]

So as with the brief, the choice of the use of a "generic argument" involves a complex of strategic choices. Bad choices are always possible, but the elaboration of thought in advance of the event is likely to aid in the discovery of potential issues and their application.

3. Other approaches to coping with overload may be forestalled. I began with a general premise that overload characterizes the entire social milieu, of which debate is only one part. The presence of generic forms of argumentation in debate may also point to the reverse applicability in other social institutions. The adaptive consequences of overload which Miller outlined all suggest a selectivity of information, short of abandoning the task itself. While other responses to overload may be required, the institutional difficulty of coping with its presence should not be borne entirely by the debate community.

As a discipline, generally in communication, more specifically within argumentation, we are faced with the task of developing strategies to cope with over-

load. This charge will not likely diminish in the foreseeable future as predictions of increased load are expected. Other responses may be required. But as the development of commonplaces by Aristotle sought to engage the participation of the common person in the function of argument, so also may generic forms of argument enable continued citizen participation in the consideration of public issues. Deferral of these choices to decision makers outside of the debate--whether in the public sector or within the academic activity--would signal the diminuation of the participatory democracy we claim.

Endnotes

[1]Austin J. Freeley, Argumentation and Debate, 5th ed., (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1981), p. vii.

[2]Georg Simmel, The Sociology of Georg Simmel, ed. and Trans. Kurt H. Wolf, (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1950). See also Karl W. Deutsch, "On Social Communication and the Metropolis," in Alfred G. Smith, ed., Communication and Culture (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966), p. 389 (Reprinted from Daedalus 90: 99-110.)

[3]Freeley, Argumentation and Debate, 5th, p. vii.

[4]William F. Ogburn, Social Change, (New York: Viking, 1923), pp. 200-201. See also F. Stuart Chapin, Cultural Change, (New York: Century, 1928), pp. 210, 218-219.

[5]Ogburn, Social Change, p. 201.

[6]Orrin E. Klapp, "Meaning Lag in the Information Society," Journal of Communication 32 (Spring 1982), p. 57.

[7]Simmel, p. 415.

[8]Deutsch, "On Societal Communication and the Metropolis," p. 389.

[9]Orrin E. Klapp, Opening and Closing, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 50-51.

[10]James G. Miller, "Information Input Overload and Psychopathology," American Journal of Psychiatry 116 (February 1960), pp. 698-699. In addition to the individual, the group, and social institutions, Miller identifies overload as occuring at the cellular and organ system level.

[11]R.C. Raymond, "Betting on the New Technologies," cited in Orrin E. Klapp, Opening and Closing, p. 48.

[12]F. Wilfred Lancaster, Information Retrieval Systems, 2nd ed., (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1979), p. 314.

[13]Michael Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co, 1967), pp. 3-25.

[14]Paul D. Reynolds, A Primer in Theory Construction, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), pp. 139-141.

[15]Klapp, "Meaning Lag in the Information Society," p. 58.

[16]Ibid., pp. 59-60.

[17]Miller, "Information Input Overload and Psychopathology," p. 697.

[18]Klapp, Opening and Closing, p. 52.

[19]Miller, "Information Input Overload and Psychopathology," p. 697.

[20]Klapp, Opening and Closing, pp. 66-67.

[21]Ibid., p. 68.

[22]See Michael Pfau, "The Present System Revisted Part One: Incremental Change," Journal of the American Forensic Association 17 (Fall 1980), pp. 80-84, and Michael Pfau, "The Present System Revisted Part Two: Policy Interrelationships," Journal of the American Forensic Association 17 (Winter 1981), pp. 146-154.

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